

Liberté and 1819 – Edinburgh's Newest Destination Restaurant and Bar Shines

Many years ago, more than I care to remember, I was involved in the PR for the Apex Hotels but hadn't set foot in the doors since.

What a delightful surprise awaited when I visited their recently refurbished ground floor at Apex Waterloo Place in Edinburgh, which now houses their brand-new destination restaurant Liberté and cocktail Bar 1819.

Tucked away on Waterloo Place just off the bustling east end of Princes Street, Liberté combines a stylish bar with a brasserie restaurant and private dining area called La Belle.



The name “Liberté” draws inspiration from the Scottish spirit of freedom, blending Scotland’s passionate energy with elegant European influences. Meanwhile, “1819” pays homage to the year when Waterloo Place, Edinburgh’s first purpose-built hotel designed by famed Scottish architect Archibald Elliot, was completed.

I must confess to rarely considering hotel restaurants and bars as obvious choices for meeting friends, but this visit has certainly changed my perspective. The venue has undergone a £2m renovation, with eye-catching design delivered by ISA, one of Edinburgh’s leading architectural firms.





The new day/night venue exudes European style with stunning Georgian interiors inspired by the Palm Courts of the 1800s. The renovation has also benefitted from expert input from hospitality specialists Stuart McCluskey (former co-owner of the Bon Vivant and current owner of 'Paz' and 'Little Capo') and Ian McLaren, former Bacardi digital director.

Bar 1819: Cocktail Excellence

Bar 1819 is stylish and buzzing with what appeared to be a mix of hotel guests, locals meeting friends and family, and colleagues enjoying post-work drinks.

Our waitress Mayada, who hails from Tunisia, was delightfully welcoming and guided us through the cocktail menu, promising that their Adelaide mixologist, Aija, would create something special. And deliver she did. We started with the floral and aromatic Elderflower Hugo Spritz, while I sampled the Shagliato Bianco, a Milan-inspired creation featuring Cochi Americano, Dolin Blanc, Bitter Truth Lemon Bitters, Prosecco,

and Soda, beautifully garnished with rosemary, lemon and olive. Both were elegant long cocktails and the perfect way to begin our evening.



They were so delicious that we ordered a second round, asking Aija for recommendations. I was presented with a Passion Fruit Gimlet, while my dining companion tried the Botanical Spritz—a cocktail bursting with berry flavours and herbal complexity named after the famous botanist Asa Grey who stayed at the hotel in 1839. Fittingly, as my friend and I had met while working for Scottish Courage, the drink contained Lindemans Framboise Lambic, a Belgian fruit beer.



Liberté: Scottish Produce with European Flair

Liberté's menu showcases the very best from Scotland's larder, using European influences and modern cooking techniques.

We were greeted by restaurant manager Erick, a familiar face who used to co-own Zucca, who ensured a warm welcome and attentive service from his team. With his Sommelier badge and Sabrage qualification (a ceremonial technique for opening Champagne with a sword), Erick is worth consulting for wine recommendations. On his advice, we selected a Malbec from Cahors in South West France.

I started with Burrata with Single Malt Heather Honey, Hazelnut and Thyme Butter, while my companion chose the healthier grilled Baby Gem with Bacon, Garlic, Pecorino and Sourdough Crumbs.



For mains, my Ox Cheek in Red Wine with Potato Puree, Bacon and Gremolata was rich and unctuous—slow-cooked until tender and falling apart and melt in the mouth. My dining companion declared her Sirloin Steak with Frites and Peppercorn Sauce

perfectly cooked to her liking. Our shared side of Tenderstem Broccoli, Winter Greens, Pecorino and Truffle Oil was generous and ideal for sharing.



The prices are comparable with other Edinburgh restaurants, though the wine list is on the steeper side.

Somehow, we managed to find room for desserts. The menu features trendy Matcha and Miso, which seems to be winning favour with Gen Z diners. We decided to “get down with the youths” and opted for the Matcha Tea crème brûlée and a Dark Chocolate Mousse with Miso Caramel, which is theatrically poured tableside, melting into a molten lava of pure deliciousness. The vibrant, pistachio-hued Matcha Tea crème brûlée was large enough to share and received our approval, though we weren’t convinced we could taste the Matcha element!



Final Verdict

All in all, we had a fabulous, relaxed evening. Both the restaurant and bar were buzzing with a great atmosphere. If I had one small criticism, it would be to dim the lighting in the restaurant, but this didn't detract from a wonderful experience where the food, drinks, and attentive, knowledgeable staff were the true stars—shining examples of hospitality done exceptionally well.

Liberté opens for lunch at 12:00 noon, serving food until 22:00. Bar 1819 opens at 8.00am until 1.00am Monday to Saturday and 8.00am until 11.00pm on Sundays.

For booking details and further information please visit the [Liberté website](#)